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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2765
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SUBJECT: NEPAL: ACTIVE MAOISTS, INACTIVE POLICE IN POKHARA

Classified By: Amb. James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C) In Pokhara on June 12, Western Region Administrator Medini Sharma told the Ambassador that attacks by the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) were ongoing, despite police efforts to "coordinate with security forces and political parties." Political party representatives from the Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress-Democratic, and Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist expressed the view that recent Maoist actions were destabilizing the peace process and that the Maoists had showed they had not yet made a true commitment to enter the political mainstream. Meanwhile, civil society representatives were concerned that police remained inactive in the face of continued YCL violence.

No Change in YCL Behavior

2. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on June 12 in Pokhara, the capital of Nepal's Western Region, Regional Administrator Medini Sharma voiced concern about continued abuses by the Maoist Young Communist League. Despite the fact that YCL cadres had less of a stronghold in the region than they did in other parts of the country, Sharma indicated that League members had continued to carry out occasional attacks on civilians in his areas of responsibility. When asked by the Ambassador about the recent YCL attack in Kapilvastu district (in which YCL members torched five vehicles and vandalized 10 others), Sharma noted that an investigation was under way. The Regional Administrator said he had given orders to arrest the League members responsible, but his officers lacked proper evidence so far to determine who was guilty. When asked by the Ambassador whether he intended to arrest the local leader of the YCL cadre for this attack, Sharma stated that he would not do so because the attack had almost certainly been carried out by lower-level cadre. He agreed with the Ambassador that it was important for the police to stand up to Maoist abuses and indicated he was pleased that Prime Minister Koirala seemed to have toughened his public stance against the YCL. The Regional Administrator had not seen a change in the YCL's behavior to date, but hoped that its abuses would begin to decrease as a

result of the PM's new tone.

Political Parties: Maoists Have Not Entered Mainstream

13. (C) District political party leaders representing the Nepali Congress (NC), Nepali Congress-Democratic (NC-D), and the Communist Party Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) emphasized to the Ambassador that the Maoists had yet to demonstrate a commitment to join mainstream politics. According to NC-D District President Soviet Adhikary, seven of the eight political parties in the Interim Government had a "clear understanding" of the way forward, but the Maoists had not indicated they wanted a free and fair Constituent Assembly process. NC District Secretary Poshnath Sharma stated that the YCL had become increasingly aggressive in recent months. CPN-UML District Secretary Rabindra Adhikary noted that the Maoists claimed that they needed to retain some weapons for their own protection, and that the political parties should be "understanding" of their difficult position.

Police Standing By

14. (C) The political leaders agreed that the police had not yet started enforcing law and order and that, in some areas, local residents had formed "neighborhood watch" groups to protect themselves from Maoist abuses. According to the politicians, locals in Pokhara had recently chased several YCL members out of their neighborhood instead of calling the police. As a result, the Maoists had returned en masse, beat up a number of locals, and forced residents to pay them

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50,000 rupees (approximately USD 770) to avoid further confrontation. The attendees agreed that vigilantism would likely become the norm if police did not take steps to crack down on the YCL.

Civil Society Organizations: "Turn Slogans Into Action"

15. (C) Activists from the Nepali human rights NGO, the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) told the Ambassador that there had been some reduction, but not an end, to human rights abuses since the signing of the Peace Agreement in November 2006. Madhu Pant, Regional Coordinator of INSEC, stated that Maoist behavior had persuaded many people that it would not be possible to hold a Constituent Assembly election. Furthermore, Pant said it was problematic that residents in Manang and Mustang districts (Himalayan districts in the north of the Western Region) were not aware of the elections process at all. Susanne Pedersen, Regional Chief of OHCHR, asserted that police inactivity throughout the region was the largest contributing factor to the poor security situation. According to Pedersen, OHCHR would be working with the NHRC to develop capacity building programs for the police. Krishna Bahadur Thapa Magar, District Coordination Committee Chairman for the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, argued that the Interim Government needed to take concrete steps immediately to address minority rights. Up to now, the eight parties had merely been paying lip service to this idea. Mr. Buddhi Bahadur Gahatraj, Regional Chairman of the Dalit Welfare Association, agreed, reminding the Ambassador that all minority groups had to be included in the process, not just the Madhesi People's Rights Forum. Members of the human rights community concurred, noting that the Interim Government should move beyond promises to concrete reform.

Comment

¶6. (C) Political party members, civil society organizations and human rights groups in Pokhara reflected disillusionment with the lack of peace in Nepal's peace process. They faulted the Maoists, particularly the YCL, but also the police for failing to enforce law and order. As we have been telling the Government of Nepal for nearly a year, this peace process must lead to real security for all of Nepal's citizens if it is ultimately to succeed.

MORIARTY